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## DID HOMER HAVE AN *ODYSSEY* IN MIND WHILE COMPOSING THE *ILIAD*?

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No one can read the *Iliad* and doubt that Achilles was the hero of that poem; others may rise to temporary prominence, but he was the first Greek named by the poet and also the last, while even the brief success achieved by the Trojans was only a part of the plan of Zeus by which Achilles was to receive greater honor. When Achilles was on the field the others were dwarfed or entirely ignored, so that in the last five books, with the exception of the *Games in Honor of Patroclus*, he was practically the only Greek mentioned.

Yet despite all the greatness of Achilles the poet of the *Iliad* was able to create and individualize as well as glorify other heroic actors. While giving this peculiar distinction to Achilles, did the poet so bring out the greatness and the glory of Odysseus as to warrant the belief that he was preparing him for the supreme character in a later and companion poem? Did the Odysseus of the *Iliad* seem to have been formed with a view to the part he was to play in the *Odyssey*? My answer to these questions is thus: The poet of the *Iliad* when he composed that poem had no intention of making Odysseus the leading hero of an epic, and so accordingly the *Odyssey* was an afterthought.

Odysseus was not one of the two or three outstanding actors of the *Iliad*, and he was far from being a rival of Achilles, for his subordination was shown by the fact that Achilles was named directly 364 times and was named by means of his patronymic or its equivalent 135 times, while Odysseus was named directly but 120 times and by the dignifying patronymic but 8 times. Next to Achilles Agamemnon was mentioned most frequently, having been named directly and by patronymic about 300 times. Diomedes was named directly and by patronymic 182 times, Ajax the son of

Telamon about 150 times, and next came Menelaus and Patroclus, and then Odysseus.

The glory of Patroclus was so brief and the references to him were so involved with the glory given to Achilles that he hardly deserved this high rank in himself; also Menelaus by reason of the fact that he was the brother of Agamemnon and husband of Helen was named beyond his own deserts as a warrior or leader. Thus in order of their own merit the rank on the basis of number of times mentioned was Achilles first, then Agamemnon, then Diomedes, then Ajax, and then Odysseus. Agamemnon had a certain glory which was due to his office and not to his personal prowess, and although he ranked second by the test of direct mention by name or by patronymic it was clearly the purpose of the poet to give the second place to Ajax, for his ships were drawn up on the shore at one end of the battle line while those of Achilles were drawn up at the other:

Α 7: ἦ μὲν ἐπ' Αἴαντος κλισίας Τελαμωνιάδαο  
ἦ δ' ἐπ' Ἀχιλλῆος, τοί ρ' ἔσχατα νῆας εἰσας  
ἔρυσσαν, ἥγορέη πίσυνοι καὶ κάρτει χειρῶν.

The poet definitely assigned to him the first place after Achilles, for, when Achilles was angry, he says:

B 768: ἀνδρῶν αὖ μέγ' ἄριστος ἔην Τελαμώνιος Αἴας.  
P 279: Αἴας, ὅς περὶ μὲν εἶδος, περὶ δ' ἔργα τέτυκτο  
τῶν ἄλλων Δαναῶν μετ' ἀμύμονα Πηλεΐωνα.

Ajax was the one called upon in times of greatest need to meet Hector, to defend the ships, and to rescue the body of Patroclus, and he alone of the fighters of the first rank was unwounded and did not withdraw from the battle. When Agamemnon inspected the ranks of the Greeks before they began the first day's fighting it was the eagerness and promptness of Ajax which especially encouraged him. When the Greeks were challenged to select a champion to meet Hector in single combat their first prayer was that the choice might fall on Ajax (H 179).

It was no doubt the great merit of Ajax as an individual fighter which induced the Greeks to send him on the *Embassy to Achilles*, a mission for which he was peculiarly ill-fitted. Those who wrote the superscriptions for the books of the *Iliad* gave an *ἀριστεία* to

Diomede, Agamemnon, Menelaus, and an equivalent to Patroclus, but no such honor to Ajax; yet his defense of the ships and the body of Patroclus deserved that distinction. Ajax was constantly called upon to meet Hector and, except for short periods when Diomede, Agamemnon, and others appear, he was always in the thick of the fight, except, of course, when entirely eclipsed by Achilles. He seemed to have been no favorite of the poet, and despite his great strength he was not allowed the honor of a single victory in the *Games*.

Diomede was the especial object of the poet's esteem, the ideal of modest yet unhesitating valor. A peculiar badge of honor is the fact that he was referred to by his patronymic far more than by his own name. When he spoke he always won applause or favor, and next to Ajax he was the one most called upon to meet the champion of the Trojans; he was repeatedly referred to as the "best of the Achaeans"; his wife was named (E 412); his ancestry and the glories of his birth were given in great detail (E 115 ff.); he was much beloved and favored by Athena; he won the chariot race, and he also took the prize in the spear fight. Diomede was the only prominent actor of the *Iliad* who continually showed valor, discretion, and ability. There can be little doubt that in those qualities which win and hold respect he was hardly second to Achilles himself, and if we did not know of the *Odyssey*, yet knew that a hero of the *Iliad* had been selected for a subsequent poem, we should certainly guess that Diomede was being prepared for that high honor. Diomede was the last of the Greek heroes to be introduced in the *Iliad*, as he was not mentioned until B 406, and he was wounded early in A, so that his career was both brief and brilliant, since he definitely retired from the combat as the result of that wound. This wounding was a most clever device of the poet to keep his stage free from too many actors of the first rank, for, had Diomede and Ajax both been fighting, Hector could never have forced the struggle at the ships and Patroclus would have had no occasion to join in the battles. The wounding of Agamemnon and Diomede was evidently due to the necessity of temporarily removing from the scene a couple of superfluous and high-grade warriors, and just as soon as they could come on the scene, without

crowding, their wounds were forgotten. The wounds then were devices of temporary expediency and were ignored when their poetic purpose had been served.

Odysseus as a warrior ranked well below Achilles, Ajax, Diomede, and Agamemnon, and this was clearly expressed by the prayer of the Greeks when the lots were cast by which their champion to meet Hector was to be selected:

H 179: Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἢ Αἴαντα λαχεῖν, ἢ Τυδείος υἱόν,  
ἢ αὐτὸν βασιλῆα πολυχρύσοιο Μυκλήνης.

We do not know who the next choice might have been, but this at least we do know, that the name of Odysseus was not in their prayers. Odysseus was the one great figure of the *Odyssey* and dominated all parts of that poem, the scenes from which he was absent no less than those in which he appeared, so that it is hard to properly appraise the Odysseus of the *Iliad* without giving to him some of the importance which is his in the later poem. Achilles was no more heroic throughout the *Iliad* than Odysseus was in the *Odyssey*, where he was so easily first that it was essentially a poem of one man and was so announced by Homer in the very first word of the poem, *ἄνδρα*. Homer when composing the *Iliad* clearly had no idea of using Odysseus as the great hero of a later poem, as is shown by the following minute but significant facts:

1. When the Greeks prayed to Zeus that the lot might fall on a worthy champion, they prayed that it might fall on Ajax, or Diomede, or on Agamemnon, but they did not mention Odysseus (H 179).
2. The two points of danger in the camp, that is, the positions at the ends, were held by Ajax and Achilles because of their great strength, while the ships of Odysseus were drawn up at the center, that is, at the place of greatest safety (Θ 222, Δ 5).
3. Odysseus never came in contact with any of the leaders of the Trojans, such as Hector, Aeneas, Sarpedon, Glaucus, nor with any but obscure and unknown warriors.
4. Ajax was called the best of men, as was Agamemnon, while Diomede was repeatedly called the best of the Achaeans, and a similar honor was given to Patroclus, but no such honor was

ever given to Odysseus, except once when he shared it with Diomedes, of whom it is a favorite expression (K 539).

5. When Andromache warned Hector of the danger that the walls at a certain spot might be forced or scaled by the best of the Greeks, she named either Ajax, Idomeneus, Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Diomedes, but did not mention Odysseus.

Z 435: τρὶς γὰρ τῇγ' ἐλθόντες ἐπειρήσανθ' οἱ ἄριστοι  
ἀμφ' Αἴαντε δύνω καὶ ἀγακλυτὸν Ἴδομενεῖα  
ἦδ' ἀμφ' Ἀτρεΐδης καὶ Τυδέος ἄλκιμον υἱόν.

6. When Hector drew the sad picture of his wife in bondage drawing water or plying the loom, he said:

Z 456: καὶ κεν ἐν Ἀργεὶ ἐοῦσα πρὸς ἄλλης ἱστὸν ὑφαίνους,  
καὶ κεν ὕδωρ φορέοις Μεσσηϊδος ἥ Ὑπερείης,

Wherever these two last places may be situated, one thing is clear at least, and that is that it never entered the fears of Hector that Odysseus would be in any position to take the kingly spoils or that the women of the royal palace would fall to him.

7. In the *Games in Honor of Patroclus* Odysseus had a draw with Ajax in wrestling, but that was due to a mean trick he played on that strong but unsophisticated warrior. Odysseus won the foot race, but not on his merits, for Ajax the son of Oileus was in the lead and would have won had he not slipped in the filth of the slain oxen. The Odysseus who appeared before the Phaeacians and who boasted of such superior athletic abilities would scarcely have been honored by the draw in wrestling or the victory in running which came to him in the games of the *Iliad*.

8. The Trojans repeatedly expressed their fears or took precautions against Achilles, Agamemnon, Ajax, Patroclus, and Diomedes, but no Trojan ever mentioned the skill or prowess of Odysseus, and in fact no one of the enemy ever mentioned his name outside of the *Teichoskopia* in Book iii except Socus, who wounded him so severely that he was forced to withdraw from the battle. If the captives of the Trojans later said among themselves that Odysseus had injured them more than any of the enemy and if because of their complaints the prize of valor was given to him,

then they conversed in tones not anticipated by the poet of the *Iliad* and for which he clearly was not preparing the hearer.

9. When Agamemnon came to Odysseus in the *Epipoleis* he gave him a most severe arraignment:

- Δ 339: καὶ σὺ, κακοῖσι δόλοισι κεκασμένη, κερδαλέοφρον,  
τίπτε καταπτώσσοντες ἀφέσταντε, μίμνετε δ' ἄλλους;  
347: νῦν δὲ φιλῶς χ' ὀρόωτε καὶ εἰ δέκα πύργοι Ἀχαιῶν  
ὑμείων προπάροιθε μαχοίατο νηλεὲς χαλκῷ.

The sting in this is much sharpened by the fact that each of the three generals whom he had just met was the subject of the greatest praise, for he said to Idomeneus, vs. 257, "Idomeneus, I honor thee beyond all the swift-steeded Danians"; to Ajax, vs. 290, "If all had thy spirit, then the city of Priam would quickly fall"; and to Nestor, vs. 313, "Would that thy limbs had the vigour of thy spirit."

10. Odysseus withdrew from the field when he saw Hector approaching (E 679), and in a later scene, despite the urgings of Diomedes, he fled, leaving Nestor with his wounded horse to face the foe. This scene is so much in point that I quote it:

- Θ 92: Διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,  
πῇ φεύγεις μετὰ νῶτα βαλὼν, κακὸς ὥς ἐν ὁμίλῳ;  
μή τίς τοι φεύγοντι μεταφρένῳ ἐν δόρῳ πῆξῃ·  
ἀλλὰ μὲν, ὅφρα γέροντος ἀπώσομεν ἄγριον ἄνδρα.  
ὥς ἔφατ'; οὐδ' ἐσάκουσε πολὺτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,  
ἀλλὰ παρήϊξεν κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν.

It is clear that Odysseus was thoroughly frightened, for in the rally that took place a little later the poet described the return to battle as follows: "Diomedes led the way, then the two sons of Atreus, next to them both the Ajaxes, then Idomeneus and his servant Meriones, then Eurypylus, and as ninth Teucer joined," but Odysseus was not in this group.

11. When Agamemnon invited the leaders of the Greeks to share in the sacrifice and the feast he invited them in the following order (B 405): Nestor, Idomeneus, either Ajax, Diomedes, and sixth Odysseus, but Menelaus came uninvited; so that Odysseus was the last to be invited by the king. When the Greeks volun-

teered to meet Hector in single combat they volunteered in this order: Agamemnon, Diomedes, either Ajax, Idomeneus, Meriones, Eurypylus, Thoas, and last of all Odysseus (H 161). And even in K when Nestor asked who would offer to go and spy on the Trojans it was Diomedes and not Odysseus who presented himself, and when Diomedes asked for someone to join him in this enterprise they responded in this order: either Ajax, Meriones, a son of Nestor, Menelaus, and last of all Odysseus.

12. Often the poet introduced the exploits of a hero with some such a phrase as the following:

Ξ 508: ἔσπετε νῦν μοι, Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι,  
 Π 692: ἔνθα τίνα πρῶτον, τίνα δ' ὕστατον ἐξεναρίξας.

Such verses were used before describing the exploits of Agamemnon, Hector, Ajax, Patroclus, and Teucer, but they were never, even remotely, connected with the deeds of Odysseus.

13. The poet very often stressed the greatness of the deed of some hero by saying that it was quite beyond the powers of men of the present time οἱοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσιν. This phrase was used in regard to Diomedes, Ajax, Hector, and Aeneas, but it was never used in connection with anything done by Odysseus.

14. Odysseus showed his skill in the presence of the Phaeacians by his ability to hurl the discus, yet he never presented himself as a competitor in the hurling contest at the *Games in Honor of Patroclus*, but the real and final proof that Homer had no notion of an *Odyssey* when he composed the *Iliad* is shown in the matter of the bow. The entire plot at the close of Odysseus' adventures depended on his skill with that weapon, and Homer prepared the hearers of the *Odyssey* for that contest by having Odysseus boast of his skill in archery in the presence of the Phaeacians, for to them he says:

θ 215: εἴ μὲν τόξον οἶδα ἐύξοον ἀμφαφάασθαι·  
 πρῶτός κ' ἄνδρα βάλοιμι διστεύσας ἐν ὀμφῃ,  
 οἶος δὴ με Φιλοκτήτης ἀπεκαίνυντο τόξῳ  
 δῆμψ' ἐν Τρώων, ὅτε τοξαζοίμεθ' Ἀχαιοί.  
 τῶν δ' ἄλλων ἐμέ φημι πολὺν προφερέστερον εἶναι.

Yet this man who boasted to be the best archer of all the Greeks save only Philoctetes never attempted to win the prize for archery



in the one great chance he had in the *Iliad*, that is, at the *Games*. This one proof, even if taken alone, shows that the poet of the *Iliad* was not anticipating nor preparing for that boast of Odysseus.

All these little points named above, when combined, prove that the poet or creator of the *Iliad* had no notion of preparing Odysseus for the great part he was to play in a later poem.

The wife of Odysseus, Penelope, was never named in the *Iliad* either by the poet or by the hero himself; Odysseus never referred to his native Ithaca and he never mentioned his father.

Both the positive and the negative proofs show that the *Odyssey* was an afterthought. We can hardly doubt that the creation of the *Iliad* brought to Homer great renown, so great that he decided to try his hand on another poem to be connected with the Trojan War; but he hardly cared to compete with himself in another war poem with its descriptions of battles, so hard to diversify; so he selected a poem of adventures by land and by sea. Two heroes of the *Iliad* were best adapted for such a poem, Diomedes and Odysseus, and the choice probably fell on Odysseus from the fact that he was so clever in his mind, and especially because he was from the remote and rugged island of Ithaca and thus in a peculiar sense a child of the sea.

The description of Odysseus as given to Priam by Helen from the walls of Troy,

Γ 200: οὔτος δ' αὖ Λαερτιάδης, πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς,  
ὃς τράφη ἐν δήμῳ Ἰθάκης κραναῆς περ ἐούσης  
εἰδὼς παντοίους τε δόλους καὶ μῆδεα πυκνά

his own references to his son, Telemachus, the fact that he was a marked favorite of Athena, and that he was also able under all conditions to think shrewdly and to act promptly, all these were characteristic of the hero of the *Odyssey*, but it was a difficult task for Homer to take the Odysseus of the *Iliad*, with the limitations named above, and make the hearers already familiar with the *Iliad* believe that he was a hero of the very first rank, hardly less heroic than Achilles himself. And it was just this necessity of preparing the hearers for the new rôle which Odysseus was to play that made Homer give so long an introduction to the *Odyssey*, since over two

thousand verses are devoted to prepare the way for the entrance of the hero.

Odysseus was not a free invention of the poet, but a part of epic tradition, since he was early called in the *Iliad* "the city-sacker," and as the *Iliad* itself furnished no justification nor explanation of that epithet it is probable that it originated before Homer. All the essential qualities of the Odysseus of the *Iliad* were retained in the *Odyssey*, but they were so magnified and so glorified that the hero of the *Odyssey* is essentially a new creation.

In the foregoing study I have not mentioned the many and obvious virtues of Odysseus in the *Iliad*; all that I have attempted to do is to show that the outlines of the *Odyssey* did not take shape side by side with those of the *Iliad*, and that the many failures of the poet to mention or to exalt Odysseus prove clearly that when composing the *Iliad* Homer had no intention of making Odysseus act the leading part in a companion poem. The *Odyssey* was plainly an afterthought.

I doubt very much if those who first heard the introduction of the *Odyssey* had any notion who the hero was to be until Ithaca was named in vs. 18, and then only vaguely until Odysseus himself was named in vs. 21. The poet brought Achilles on at once in the action of the *Iliad*, but he did not choose to bring Odysseus on the scene of the *Odyssey* until he had devoted more than four books to preparing the mind of the hearer for his reception, or until that hearer had learned from the mouths of gods and heroes the superlative excellences of Odysseus himself. It has been hard for me to grasp the motive which led the poet to give so extensive an introduction to the *Odyssey*, but now I see that it was to prepare the audience for the new and exalted part which Odysseus was to play. All this is not the creation of tradition but of a supreme and original genius.